

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Sacramento
March 1960

Honorable Hugh M. Burns, President Pro Tem of the Senate
and
Honorable Ralph M. Brown, Speaker of the Assembly


Pursuant to Division 5, Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 1.3 Section 3211 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, the Coordinating Council on State Programs for the Blind herewith submits to the Legislature its eighth annual report covering the period from January 1, 1959 to December 31, 1959.

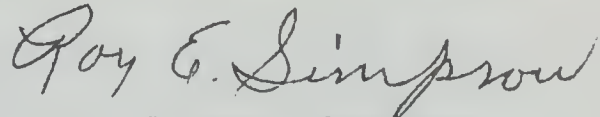
We believe the work of the Council has furthered the principle contained in the statute creating the Council; namely, provide for the coordination of the functions and programs of the various state departments insofar as such functions and programs affect the blind.

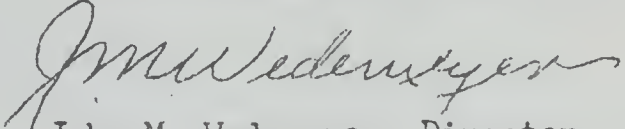
We trust this report will be of assistance to the Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

COORDINATING COUNCIL ON STATE
PROGRAMS FOR THE BLIND


Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., Director
State Department of Public Health


Roy E. Simpson, Director
State Department of Education


John M. Wedemeyer, Director
State Department of Social Welfare



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MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

During the twelve-month period covered by this report, January 1, 1959 to December 31, 1959, the Council members were:

Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., Director, State Department of Public Health
Roy E. Simpson, Director, State Department of Education
John M. Wedemeyer, Director, State Department of Social Welfare

The Council met four times during the year to further the coordination of State programs for the blind. The chairmanship rotated among its members, and as in previous years the Coordinating Committee on State Services for the Blind served as a working committee reporting to the Council at these quarterly meetings. The committee membership was as follows:

Department of Education

Francis W. Doyle, Deputy Superintendent; Chief, Division of
Special Schools and Services

Allen Jenkins, Administrator, Orientation Center for the Blind

Berthold Lowenfeld, Superintendent, California School for the Blind

Andrew Marrin, Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Service

Bernece McCrary, Supervisor, Field Service for the Adult Blind

Dorothy L. Misbach, Consultant in Education of the Blind

S. W. Patterson, Assistant Chief, Division of Special Schools and
Services

Anthony E. Septinelli, Supervisor of Services for the Blind

Virginia S. Simpson, Blind Section Librarian

Ernest P. Willenberg, Chief, Bureau of Special Education

Department of Public Health

William D. Simmons, Supervisor, Prevention of Blindness Program

Department of Social Welfare

Lillian McClure, Assistant Chief, Division for the Blind

Perry Sundquist, Chief, Division for the Blind

FOREWORD

The independence, success, and happiness of any human being depends upon how adequately he is able to meet the demands of his daily life. The traumatic and frustrating experience of blindness cuts off a large part of the sensory world, interrupts employment, disrupts the home, disturbs emotional balance, and introduces fear. To keep up with its expansive growth, California can not do without the contribution of each of its citizens to the limit of his capacity. Humane as well as economic interests of California are served by three programs designed to achieve the most significant contribution from its blind citizens:

1. The Legislature in this session emphasized the importance of an aggressive program to prevent blindness. This program seeks the causes of blindness, develops control procedures, educates for early discovery of blinding conditions, and applies public health methods for reducing the burden of blindness, half of which is estimated to be preventable.

2. The goals of adjustment to self, family, and community and learning the basic means of achieving independence and satisfaction in life can be attained through a broad range of education programs.
3. Financial assistance to blind individuals is available through social welfare programs. The objectives of these programs are to assist the individual to maintain himself in dignity and to contribute to the reduction of dependency to the fullest extent possible.

The elective bodies of California seeking to serve the best interests of all citizens can take justifiable pride in the State services provided for individuals handicapped by loss of sight. The leadership which California assumes in solving the problems of tremendous growth make it imperative these programs for the blind be measured constantly against the need.

REVIEW OF DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMS

I. Prevention of Blindness Program

- A. The State Department of Public Health, through action in the last general session of the Legislature, now maintains a statewide program for prevention of blindness which includes the following features:
 1. Studies to determine the number, distribution, and nature of conditions leading to blindness in the population of the State.
 2. Practical investigations into the cause of blindness in order to develop control procedures.
 3. Assistance to local health departments and consultation with other local agencies directed toward mass education for prevention of blindness, early identification of conditions leading to blindness, and the application of methods for reducing blindness resulting from preventable conditions.

During this year progress has been made in developing local programs for the early detection of two important causes of blindness--one among older individuals (glaucoma), and one found in its correctible state in our youngest population group (amblyopia). The attention of the Legislature to prevention of blindness served to stimulate a great deal of community interest in practical measures. Notable among these is the organization of four glaucoma screening clinics in hospitals in southern California (Los Angeles County). They are free to the public and though only recently opened are already performing a useful and needed function in the communities. The year-end also saw the organization meeting (in San Jose) for a unique vision screening clinic to be located in the city health department and jointly sponsored by the County Medical Society with the backing of many community groups.

II. Education Programs for the Visually Handicapped

A. Field Service for Blind Preschool Children and Their Parents in southern California

The success of preventive measures can be seen most dramatically in the decline in numbers of preschool children whose blindness is due to one condition--RLF (retrolental fibroplasia). In the peak years of this epidemic, 1951-53, the majority of blindness in young children was caused by this one condition. Once out of infancy, their parents needed help in adjusting to their problem and in training the child. So in 1955, the peak year of such field services provided in southern California by visiting teachers of the California School for the Blind, 251 children were served by five teachers. Almost 80 per cent of these children were blind of RLF. By the end of 1959 two teachers were serving 81 children in southern California. Only a little more than one-third of these children were blind of RLF.

B. California School for the Blind

The California School for the Blind provides education for blind, partially blind, and deaf-blind children from kindergarten through high school. It functions under the Division of Special Schools and Services in the State Department of Education as part of the public school system of the State. The school aims to assist blind children in gaining a knowledge of the realities around them, to instill in them confidence to cope with these realities, and to give them the feeling that they are recognized as individuals in their own right. It is the school's policy to have all senior high school students (10th through 12th grades) attend public high schools in Berkeley or Oakland, while they receive reader's service, guidance, tutoring, and room and board at the California School for the Blind. This arrangement is designed so that students can gradually adjust to working, associating, and competing with their seeing peers.

Among the younger children most are blind from RLF. This large share of RLF continues to result in a large number of pupils who have no useful residual vision. Since children born in the last peak year, 1953, became of school age in 1959, it can be foreseen that this and next year will be the last years in which a large influx of RLF children must be expected. In 1954 and thereafter, their numbers reduced markedly to the extent that from 1957 on only sporadic cases of RLF occurred. This fact will inevitably make a difference in the enrollment of the school and other educational facilities for blind children.

At the end of the 1958-59 school year, a total of 24 students left the school. Of these four graduated, 14 went to public school facilities in their home communities, and 6 left for other reasons such as moving out of the State, illness, and lack of progress. New admissions brought the enrollment in the current school year to 161.

C. Visually Handicapped Children in Public Schools

At the beginning of the year the Bureau of Special Education registered with the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky, 957 legally blind children enrolled in public schools from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Under the instruction of 60 teachers 500 blind pupils were enrolled in 54 classes. Under 68 teachers 840 partially-seeing pupils were enrolled in 60 classes; six districts or counties have established programs on an itinerant basis. Oakland has one of the oldest and best known itinerant programs for partially-seeing students in the United States. Stanislaus County, Santa Clara County, Tulare County, and Marin County have initiated in recent years itinerant programs for partially-seeing students; Kern County has a part-time teacher on this basis, and Monterey County has a consultant in vision education. It is hoped that more itinerant programs will be established to provide for the needs of many partially-seeing children believed to be presently neglected. More of the recently established programs for blind children are of the resource type rather than the special day class, thus permitting a high degree of integration in the regular classes.

Two educational counselors are providing supplemental services for blind and low-visioned students not enrolled in special classes, resource, or itinerant programs. In northern California 21 blind and 40 low-visioned students are receiving such services, while in southern California supplemental services are provided for 18 blind and 56 low-visioned students. Many of these students are in junior or senior high schools. As the work of the counselors is becoming better known, additional names are referred to them for assistance.

There are at least 25 children known who are blind and also have cerebral palsy. There are also known to be a large number of children of school age or approaching school age who are not talking, have bizarre behavior problems, and are blind or have severe visual loss, yet appear to have intelligence. Because adequate facilities are not provided for such children, many of the young ones are being admitted to State hospitals. The whole problem of multiple handicapped children is in urgent need of study if it is our hope to help each individual to achieve maximum independence and satisfaction and so to lessen the costs of institutional care.

D. Readers' Service for Blind College Students

During the school year approximately 60 blind students used the readers' service. The average amount used per student was a little over \$400.

During the last few months of the 1958-59 college year, students were requested to cut their reading time ten per cent due to insufficient funds in the budget. The number of blind college students in California is growing larger. Therefore, increased funds appropriated to the California School for the Blind, as well as available under

Vocational Rehabilitation Services will be needed for readers' service. Since college graduation has proved to be almost equal to unemployment insurance for blind students, funds appropriate for this purpose are certainly a good investment.

E. Home Teacher-Counselor Services for the Adult Blind

Field Rehabilitation Services for the Adult Blind provide services in the homes of blind men and women throughout the State. Services consist of personal and family counseling and orientation which includes the teaching of skills to give the individual new freedom in daily living and provide him with the tools which he will need.

During the past year the Home-Counselors made over 20,000 home calls, which include 9,000 counseling sessions as well as over 11,000 lessons in Braille, typing, cane travel, household arts, orientation, etc. Over 800 referrals to other agencies have been made. Thirteen blind inmates of Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo have been given varying degrees of instruction in Braille, typing, and cane travel.

Many deaf-blind are included in the present roster of pupils.

F. Orientation Center for the Blind

The Orientation Center for the Blind in Oakland continues to provide orientation and guidance to active and productive lives for blind individuals from all segments of society. During this year 53 students were enrolled. Of the 49 students whose orientation program was terminated, 16 are taking further training at the school, one is self employed, 7 are employed by others, 2 are housewives, 13 are unemployed, and the remainder are ill or their status is unknown.

G. California State Library - Books for the Blind

During the calendar year 1959 there was an increase of over 12 per cent in the circulation of Braille and Talking Book records. A total of 12,388 volumes in Braille and Moon and 93,257 containers of Talking Book records were circulated making a grand total of 105,645 volumes and containers. The circulation of embossed type books rose by 10 per cent this year reversing a downward trend which had been in evidence for quite a few years. This increased use resulted from the addition of more Braille instructors to the Division of Special Schools and Services and the availability of a very fine collection of children's books in Braille.

At the end of the year there were 3,272 active borrowers, an increase of 307 over last year.

From the Library of Congress 830 new talking book machines were received, and 1,395 new and reconditioned talking book machines were sent to new applicants and as replacements for worn-out or obsolete machines. In spite of this, the waiting list for

talking book machines has remained constant at approximately 300 at all times during the year and the waiting period about 4 months.

H. California Industries for the Blind

The three production centers for the blind operated by the Department of Education again showed an increase with sales totaling \$2,725,000 for the year. The increase was largely due to sales to the Federal Government which amounted to 69 per cent of the total.

Wages paid to the blind and handicapped totaled \$572,209, the highest wage payment in the history of the operations of the three centers. The Department has continued to improve the pay rates for the workers whenever possible and has made retroactive wage adjustments when funds were available from current operations.

The Coordinating Council on State Programs for the Blind in its 1958 report to the Legislature suggested operations in the centers be limited to: (1) production of goods which can be sold to federal, state, county, and city political subdivisions and districts; (2) production of carefully selected items that can be sold competitively with private industry; and (3) sub-contract or assembly operations.

These are worthwhile objectives and the policy of the Department of Education has been to limit operations as far as possible to the three fields during the year. The 1959 General Session of the Legislature recommended to the political subdivisions and districts of the state, city, and county governments that they purchase products of the production centers whenever it was feasible for them to do so. There has not been sufficient time since the legislation became effective for the results to be apparent. During the latter part of the fiscal year, a contract was entered into with a firm of marketing consultants who undertook a statewide survey of the market potential and developed a marketing organization program that will be adopted. The Department of Finance has approved the organizational changes and the Personnel Board staff is now processing the necessary changes in specifications. Increased emphasis will be given to sub-contract or assembly operations and a full time sales engineer in the southern California area is contemplated under the new program.

I. Vocational Rehabilitation Service for the Blind

During the year 621 clients were served by rehabilitation counselors and job placements were secured for 44 blind persons from July 1, 1959 through December 31, 1959. The vending stand program has grown and another business enterprise officer is being added to the staff to be assigned to the Los Angeles office. A gross sale business of \$4,128,608 was done by vending stands, snack bars, and cafeterias operated by blind individuals. The average earning per month per person was \$414. Blind operators employed 296 persons of whom 51 were blind and 29 were otherwise disabled, paying total wages of \$519,617.

III. Social Welfare Programs for the Blind

A. California's three social welfare programs for the blind may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Aid to Needy Blind

This program provides financial assistance and other services to needy blind persons. In December, 1959, 13,713 persons received an average grant of \$96.44 and an average medical care payment of \$5.33. Actually, most of these persons have been self-supporting sighted men and women and blindness has occurred at an age when retirement had already begun.

The average age of recipients of aid to the blind is 69 years. About 900 are under 40 years of age. Slightly less than a quarter live alone, over half live with close relatives--spouse, children, or parents. In comparison with Old Age Security, financial need is greater and the income less. During the year some 15 new statutes were enacted amending the Aid to the Blind law. The most significant statute from the point of view of meeting the needs of blind persons was an increase in the maximum grant from \$110 to \$115 a month.

2. Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind Residents

This program provides financial assistance, with liberal income exemptions, as incentives to blind persons who have a plan to achieve self-support so they may become independent of public assistance. During the year almost 20 per cent of these persons had their public assistance discontinued because of their earnings. Some of these blind men and women will have their aid restored, while others have achieved full and permanent self-support. In December, 1959, 295 persons received Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind Residents with an average grant of \$106.04 and an average medical care payment of \$3.07.

3. Prevention of Blindness

This program provides medical eye care for applicants and recipients of Aid to the Blind when such care might restore vision and prevent further loss of sight. The program is primarily a surgical one, covers all of the expenses incident to such care including a presurgical eye examination, a physical examination, a surgical fee, hospitalization, postoperative care by the surgeon, and a final refraction and glasses. Additional items, such as transportation and postoperative nursing home care are also provided when necessary. During the year 346 eye surgeries were performed of which 322 were cataract surgeries. It is estimated that about 92 per cent of these surgeries resulted in

improving vision, and in about 88 per cent of the cases vision was so greatly improved that the patients were no longer eligible for Aid to the Blind.

B. Coordination with other state agencies

In order to use to the maximum resources of other state agencies assisting blind persons to achieve self-support or self-care, the Department has since 1954 referred all new applicants and recipients of Aid to the Blind if age 60 or under to the Home-Teacher Counselor Service for the Adult Blind. A total of 3,360 referrals have been made to this service. Many of these have been further referred to the Vocational Rehabilitation Service. A total of 366 Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind recipients had been referred directly to Vocational Rehabilitation Service by the State Department of Social Welfare.

C. Need of the Programs

1. The success of the Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind Residents program is dependent upon a greatly accelerated program of job placement. One phase of the effort to create more economic opportunities has been initiated during the past year by the Coordinating Council in connection with apprenticeship training for blind persons.
2. Efforts will continue to encourage lower caseloads for county social workers handling Aid to the Blind so that the responsibility for decreasing dependency can be more effectively carried out.
3. The Prevention of Blindness program should be expanded to cover other than applicants for Aid to the Blind since there are many persons with markedly impaired vision who could be benefited by medical care which they can not afford.
4. Less than half the recipients of Aid to the Blind have income with which to meet special needs, such as telephone, housing and utilities, laundry service, care in a boarding or nursing home, or restaurant meals. The lack of any resources with which to meet the cost of such special need for so large a portion of recipients constitutes the most serious inadequacy in the program.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE NEEDS

In its discussions throughout this year the Coordinating Council and its committee have recognized as a major problem in meeting the needs of blind persons the lag in development of opportunities for self support. Continuing its past responsibility for reporting to the Legislature on major aspects of State programs for the blind, the Council has undertaken a study of the needs for apprenticeship opportunities and trade training. Information has been accumulated which will indicate the size of this need and preliminary discussions are going on with appropriate individuals in other State agencies,

e.g. the Division of Apprenticeship Standards. The survey will be ready in the near future and steps recommended toward the long-term goal of broadening economic opportunity for blind individuals.

